



April 14, 2021
The Honorable Jim Justice
Governor of West Virginia
State Capitol, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E
Charleston, WV 25305

Dear Governor Justice,

We are writing to you as members of the Appalachian Queer Youth Summit (AQYS) group. AQYS is a group of young LGBTQ+ high school students in West Virginia who have come together to learn how to engage in the political process and advocate for LGBTQ+ issues in our state. This summit was created because many LGBTQ+ young people in West Virginia are isolated from other members of our community, and don't always have a place to feel safe or comfortable being ourselves in our schools, communities, and even our homes. Members of our group have faced discrimination and now have a drive to change our state's views and outlook on LGBTQ+ people for the better.

Our AQYS group needs to encourage you to veto HB 3293. According to the UCLA Williams Institute, West Virginia has the highest number of trans teenagers per capita out of all 50 states. [Their most recent report](#) also ranked West Virginia as tied for last place of public support and acceptance of LGBTQ+ people.

The lack of support and acceptance of LGBTQ+ people is also evident throughout West Virginia schools. The 2017 GLSEN National School Climate Survey reported that West Virginia LGBTQ+ secondary students - the same age group being targeted by this bill - reported verbal harassment at school because of their orientation (82%) and gender identity (76%). Many also reported physical harassment in school as well. This bill promotes this harmful behavior and may ultimately be responsible for these percentages to increase.

Lastly, the Legislature has already been warned that passing this law would be in direct violation of Title IX in the U.S. Constitution and will result in costly litigation. A means of bypassing this,

however, is to veto HB 3293 and ensure that West Virginia will avoid future lawsuits and additional harm to its LGBTQ+ students.

The existence of this and other similar bills already causes harm. It reinforces negative misconceptions about LGBTQ+ people and is hurtful to people you represent. A veto of HB 3293 would demonstrate to trans youth across the state that somebody is defending and protecting them from any more harm, despite the overwhelming damage debate on this bill has already had on many West Virginians, or its passage in the Legislature.

This is especially important right now, as LGBTQ+ students are already facing many obstacles, and now our transgender students are in fear of losing even more of the same basic rights as their cisgender peers.

We strongly urge you to veto this bill for our safety and our future.

Sincerely,
Appalachian Queer Youth Summit members